

# Season comes to close for Wildcat volleyball in sub-state title match



***Louisburg senior Evyn Richardson tips the ball over a Rock Creek blocker last Saturday at Rock Creek High School.***

ST. GEORGE – For the last two seasons, the Louisburg volleyball team ventured on the road and captured back-to-back sub-state championships.

This season the Wildcats found themselves in the same position and faced a tough task as they traveled to No. 1 seed Rock Creek.

After a 2-0 victory over Independence in the sub-state semifinals, the Wildcats battled Rock Creek in the championship game in hopes of making it a third-straight trip

to state.

Although they battled, Louisburg came up short in a 25-18 and 25-23 setback to the Mustangs on Saturday at Rock Creek High School. The Wildcats finished the season with a 20-16 record.

“The end of any season is always tough, and losing in the championship on Saturday was heartbreaking for sure,” Louisburg coach Leanna Willer said. “Rock Creek is a great team, but we sure put up a great fight. In the first set I thought we wanted to compete, but let them score too many runs and get too many easy points from us. In the second set, I thought we really went for it and believed that that could be our game.

“We stepped up every aspect of our game it felt like and we were in it right until the very end. We are very proud of the heart that our girls showed in that match.”

Rock Creek, which came into the tournament with a 32-4 record, provided a lot of challenges for the Wildcats. Mustang middle blocker Ayla Klingenberg was big at the net with 12 kills on the night, while setter Brynna Moeller had 17 assists.

“Rock Creek is a great team,” Willer said. “Their ball control is very solid, and (Moeller) is quite impressive. She is offensive-minded, very athletic and moves the ball around well to put their hitters in good positions. Klingenberg is a force to be reckoned with at the net and we knew it would be a challenge to stop her.

“Additionally, they are just a strong team from every position. They are tall and strong at the net so they put up a good block, and they have girls that can swing aggressively from each position. As I said before, they are a very strong team and one that I imagine will do well at the state tournament later this week.”



***Louisburg junior McKenna Lohse goes up for a block Saturday at Rock Creek.***

Still, the Wildcats were able to put up a fight, especially in the second set. Louisburg was down 18-14 when McKenna Lohse tallied two kills and Addi Mallett added another to make it 18-17.

Rock Creek went up 19-17, but Lohse added two more kills to tie the match. The Mustangs went up 22-20, but Caileigh Kilgore answered with two kills of her own to tie the match again.

It wasn't enough as Rock Creek scored three of the next four points to take the set and the match.

"We really did leave it all out there on the floor," Willer said. "After the game, we talked about how we all should walk out of that gym with our heads held high knowing that we gave it our all and played what I think was our best volleyball of the season. The environment in the gym was great – I'll give

credit to the Rock Creek Student Section – they sure brought the noise.

“That being said, our families, friends, and loved ones that made the trip out there to support us really brought the energy. It means a lot to our girls to be able to look up in the stands and see so much purple.”

Lohse and Kilgore led the Wildcats at the net with seven and six kills, respectively. Senior Evyn Richardson added five. On the day, Lohse tallied 13 kills and Kilgore had 11.

The players also fared well at the net defensively as they challenged several Rock Creek attacks.

“Our hitters did a great job at the net overall,” Willer said. “We minimized our unforced errors which helped us win the semi-final and compete in the championship. Kenna hit .500 on the day with 13 kills and only 1 error on 24 attempts. Caileigh hit .409 with 11 kills and only 2 errors on 22 attempts.

“Our offense among the rest of our hitters was solid as well – those two just stood out the most for us. On the defensive side of things, I was proud of how well our team blocked against Rock Creek, especially considering they were the taller, bigger team. We played tough at the net and competed well all day.”





***Louisburg senior Aspen Coulter passes the ball off to a teammate Saturday at Rock Creek.***

Sophomore setter Adelyn Moore had 20 assists, while senior libero Aspen Coulter led the team with nine digs. Moore and Mallett each had five.

Against Independence, the Wildcats controlled the game from behind the service line and it started with Lohse. The Louisburg junior led the way with six aces in the Wildcats' 25-19 and 25-14 win.

In all, Louisburg had 12 aces in the semifinal match, including two from senior Jaden Bentz and junior Delaney Nelsen.

Moore ran the offense well as she recorded 23 assists against the Bulldogs, while Mallett and Lohse each had six kills.

Defensively, Coulter led the back row with six digs and senior Ally Brown had four. Another senior, Katie McKain, finished

with a team-high two blocks.

The loss against Rock Creek also meant the final game in a Louisburg uniform for five seniors as Bentz, Brown, Coulter, McKain and Richardson all saw their Wildcat careers come to a close.

"These five seniors have been wonderful with the team this season," Willer said. "As a group, they faced a unique challenge in the sense that our senior class last year was so big, and really only one of this year's seniors came in with much varsity experience. That being said, this group didn't miss a beat and stepped up to the challenge wholeheartedly.

"I have been so impressed by this group of girls this season because of their selflessness and team first mentality. They walked in the gym every day willing to work hard and wanting to get better, and I think that showed on the court on Saturday. They gave so much of themselves to this team and our program and we are so lucky to have had them be a part of it. We will miss them so much next year."